



**GREEN  
HOUSE  
DATA**

Built right. Just for you.

*White Paper*



# **Keys to Selling the Cloud**

Growing Services & Revenue  
with a Cloud Provider Partnership

Whether you're new to cloud computing as an IT service offering or evaluating new partnership opportunities for your company, you'll need to know what advantages the cloud can offer your customers, what questions to ask to open a cloud dialog, and how to start rolling out a cloud project with a cloud service provider on behalf of your client.

If you're a sales professional in the IT or telco industries, you may already know why some of your clients are considering cloud services. Business drivers like flexibility, scalability, capital expense (CapEx) reduction, service delivery issues, and disaster recovery are all reasons IT teams are evaluating cloud computing. The role of a cloud service provider (CSP) is to provide the base infrastructure and support partners to help increase their revenues and offer improved service to end-users.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE CLOUD**

To sell the cloud successfully, you have to have a solid grasp on the concept at hand. That's easier said than done, as the cloud means many different things to different people. For the everyman (or woman) the cloud is just where their cell phone tells them to backup their photos, using iCloud or Microsoft's OneDrive. Cloud can also be Software as a Service, like GotoMeeting or Salesforce – basically a web portal for a service that is hosted elsewhere.

*Cloud computing is expected to grow at a 30% CAGR from 2013 through 2018 compared with 5% growth for overall enterprise IT, according to Goldman Sachs.*

In this case, cloud is Infrastructure as a Service, which means enterprise scale IT infrastructure

rented out on demand. Basically, each physical server hosts between two and a dozen virtual machines, each of which can be scaled up and down as the user needs more computing resources. Your clients host their applications on these virtual machines (VMs), allowing access to our geographically separate, highly redundant data centers.

The cloud service provider can help with engineering, or you can, or your clients can handle it themselves—whatever is needed based on skill level and desired services. The CSP provides the raw infrastructure and then customizes a solution on top of that, working closely with you to meet the customer's needs.

In some ways, cloud computing is similar to selling WAN services. Many of the same business challenges facing IT are solved by a solid cloud platform as a great network solution—flexibility, reliable service delivery, adaptability to future applications. In both cases, providers help the end user avoid hardware management so they can focus on service and/or application delivery.

## **MAKING CLOUD INROADS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS**

The main theme to keep in mind with a cloud provider is that we are here to support your efforts as an IT broker or service provider. A CSP has the staff, hardware, and network resources available for almost any project.

As a service partner, your main objective is to uncover cloud sales opportunities and help guide your client through the process. You can even use a completely white labeled solution with your own branding, while leveraging our support and engineering expertise.

Consider asking the following questions to start a conversation about cloud with your customers:

- *Have you ever thought about using a cloud provider?*
- *Do you have a technology refresh coming within the next 12 months? What is your expected CapEx and OpEx for maintaining that hardware?*
- *What is your current Disaster Recovery plan for IT?*
- *Is infrastructure management—including hardware upgrades, software patching, or backups—taking up too much of your team’s time, or costing too much?*
- *Do your onsite servers, storage, and networking have redundant components and backups to avoid outages?*
- *Is your information subject to compliance standards like HIPAA or PCI-DSS?*

You don’t need to be a cloud expert to close a deal like this. When you send an opportunity to your CSP, they assign infrastructure consultants and engineering support to work with you and your client, allowing a technical conversation to qualify the lead and prove that we are offering a competent solution. When you engage in this process it also helps you learn more about the cloud. After a few deals, you’ll begin to become a subject matter expert yourself!

## **HELPFUL INFORMATION TO GATHER BEFORE THE PROJECT**

After you launch a cloud conversation with your potential client, there are a few key concepts and questions you can ask to reassure the customer about your technical expertise and help start planning the project.



*A cloud service provider can help you provide new services to customers—and help sell them, too.*

These questions are not necessary to seal the deal, but they can help you present yourself as an expert. Here are some questions you may consider asking to lay this groundwork:

- **What is the purpose of your project?**  
*Is it a primary system, do you want to add scalability, is it for testing and development, do you need improved performance, do you need a disaster recovery solution?*
- **What are some possible technology drivers?**
- **Are your in-house systems or current provider under performing?**  
*Have you experienced unacceptable levels of downtime? Do you need additional redundancy, security, or compliance measures? Are you reaching the end of a hardware lifecycle?*
- **Is your current infrastructure virtualized, and if so, what is the hypervisor?**  
*VMware, OpenStack, Hyper-V, KVM, Zen?*
- **How many physical or virtual servers are active in your current environment?**
- **What operating systems do you use?**  
*Microsoft, Linux, Unix, Solaris*
- **What types of applications are you running?**  
*SQL/MySQL, Exchange, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Oracle, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), financial systems (Intuit, etc), or proprietary?*

- *What licensing requirements do you have for these operating systems and applications?*
- *Some licenses can be moved over to your cloud provider while others will require a new purchase. Do you need the cloud provider to procure licensing on your behalf and include it in your invoicing?*
- *What type of storage do you need? Do you anticipate growth in this amount of storage? High or low performance tiers are available depending on requirements*

If the customer doesn't have answers to any or all of these questions, it isn't a problem. Same if you aren't sure about licensing issues, or different types of hypervisors. The information is just to help us lay out a project plan.

## **ADDITIONAL SERVICES**

While you may want to be cautious about a hard sell, often times cloud projects are a great time to add an additional services. Simply knowing the names of these services and asking your client about them can help uncover new opportunities and solve a problem that the customer may not have undertaken on their own.

Don't be concerned about specific applications or vendors, just the concepts at hand. Your CSP should be a reliable resource whenever you need help during the discovery process or when working on a new product or solution with a customer.

Ancillary cloud services can include:

- *Backup as a Service: fully administered cloud backup*
- *Disaster Recovery as a Service: fully administered disaster recovery (different from backup mostly due to automation, full disaster*

*plan, only keeping essential systems depending on the plan)*

- *Colocation: customers can place their current hardware in a provider's data center. Can be used alongside cloud servers in a hybrid cloud environment.*
- *Patching and upgrade services: System administrators can maintain application or operating system versions and keep systems up to date.*
- *Desktop as a Service: delivers virtual desktops, much like virtual machines, that users can log into remotely with pre-installed applications and configurations. Can allow greater computing power with limited hardware (thin clients) as well as greater administrator control.*
- *Security as a Service: system administrators will monitor cloud systems, network traffic, and antivirus/antimalware platforms to keep everything up to date against the latest vulnerabilities, and defend against live attacks.*
- *Virtual load balancer: load balancers can be physical or virtual appliances that direct network traffic in a more efficient manner in order to improve end user performance.*

Familiarizing yourself and your potential clients with cloud solutions is a great way to provide better service—they may not even realize what their infrastructure is missing.

Overall, working with the right cloud service provider will help your company broaden your service offerings, grow significant revenue from referrals, and provide reliable infrastructure with a variety of additional product options. If you have any other questions, please reach out to Green House Data and our partner program liaisons will get back to you as soon as possible.